



Stay Out — Stay Alive

Mine Hazard Awareness Campaign 2000



Purpose: To make children and adults aware of the dangers found at active and abandoned mine sites through a public safety campaign. The Mine Hazard Awareness Campaign is a partnership of federal, state, private organizations and businesses.

When: April 16–30, 2000 in conjunction with Earth Day activities.

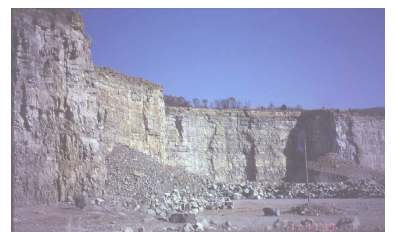
Activities are locally based and include visits and talks at schools and clubs, distributing and posting warning materials, and sharing resources and information.

Mining is an important part of the American economy. Over half of the electricity generated in this country comes from coal. Sand, gravel, limestone, and other rock products are used in the construction industry. Salt keeps wintry roads free of ice. Gold, silver, iron, copper, and many other minerals are essential to our national prosperity.

Mines are located in every state—from small sand and gravel operations to complex underground coal, salt, limestone, or metal mines, to extensive surface mines that use some of the largest industrial equipment ever built. There are about 14,000 active and over 500,000 abandoned mines in the nation. As cities and towns spread into the surrounding countryside and more people visit remote locations, the possibility of contact with an active or abandoned mine increases.

Dangers at active and abandoned mine sites. The men and women who work at mine sites are trained to work in a safe manner. For the unauthorized visitor on an active mine site, or the hiker, off-roader, or rock-hound enjoying outdoor recreation, the hazards are not always apparent. Active and abandoned mine sites have proved to be an irresistible—and sometimes deadly—draw for children and adults.

- **Vertical shafts** can be hundreds of feet deep. At the surface, shafts can be completely unprotected, hidden by vegetation, or covered by rotting boards.
- **Horizontal openings** may seem sturdy, but rotting timbers and unstable rock formations make cave-ins a real danger. Darkness and debris add to the hazards.
- Lethal concentrations of **deadly gases** (methane, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, and hydrogen sulfide) can accumulate in underground passages.
- Unused or misfired **explosives** can become unstable and deadly—vibrations from a touch or footfall can trigger an explosion.
- Excavated vertical cliffs—**highwalls**—in open pit mines and quarries can be unstable and prone to collapse.
- Hills of loose material in **stock or refuse piles** can easily collapse to bury an unsuspecting biker or climber.
- **Water-filled quarries and pits** can hide rock ledges, old machinery, and other hazards. Because of the depth, the water can be dangerously cold; steep, slippery walls make exiting these swimming holes very difficult.



In 1999, 17 people died while seeking adventure on mine property. The majority drowned in water-filled quarries and pits; others died from all-terrain vehicle accidents, falls, and suffocation.

Any community with active or abandoned mines, quarries, or pits could become the scene of the next tragedy. For more information, please contact: Mark Davis, U.S. Department of Labor, Mine Safety and Health Administration, 703-235-1372, mdavis@msha.gov, or visit the MSHA web site: www.msha.gov. MSHA has a toll-free hotline for reporting unsafe access to active and abandoned mine sites: 1-800-499-1038.